

Redesign of Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) Program Leads to Increased Behavior Change

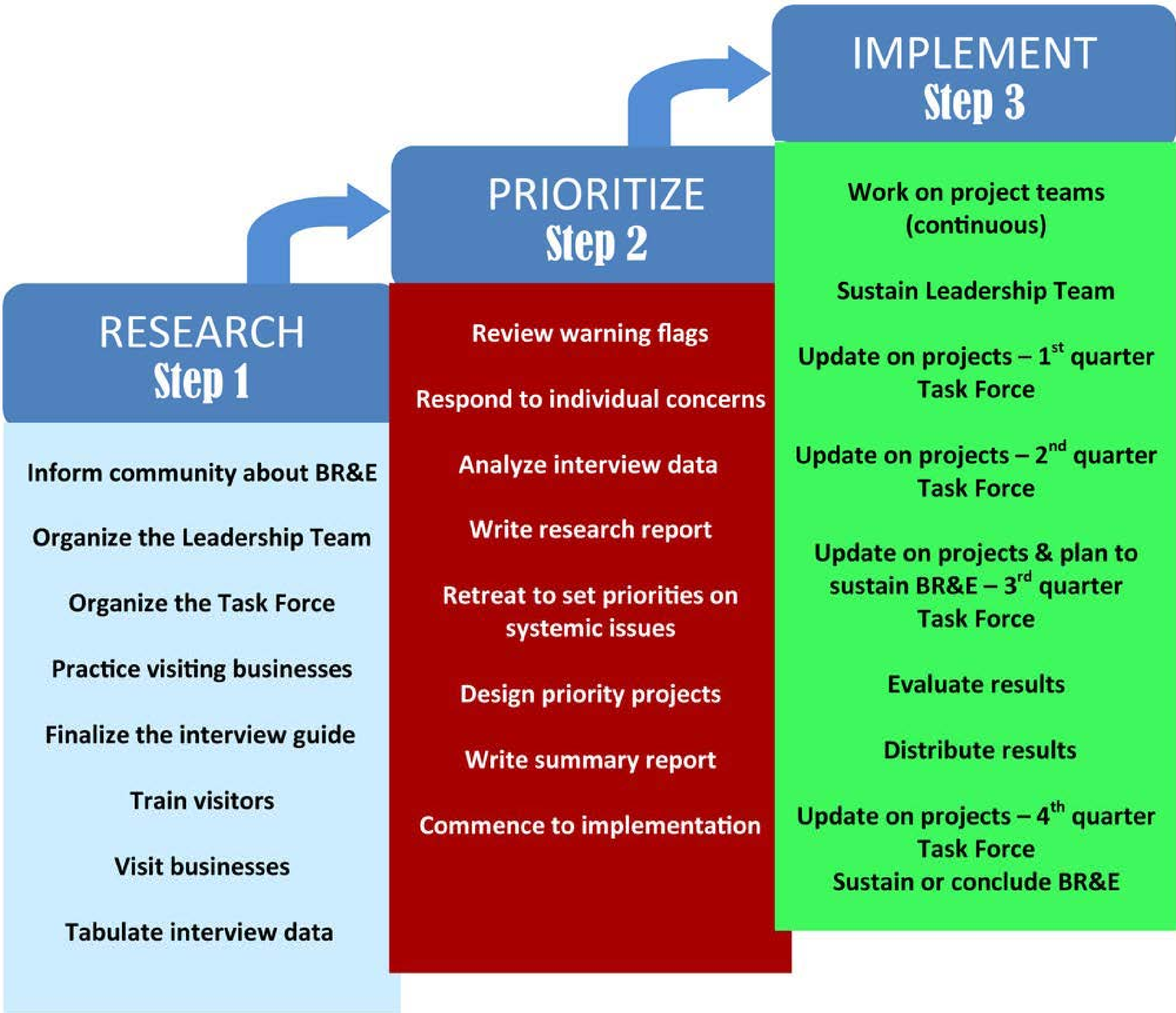
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BR&E as a key component of economic development

BR&E visitation allows community leaders the opportunity to interview local business owners about current business concerns. Feedback from these visits helps inform the barriers local businesses face as they strive to grow and thrive. It also helps identify systemic issues affecting the community’s prospects for retaining and expanding local business.

Extension's BR&E Program was redesigned to emphasize implementing priority plans



BR&E target audience is economic development organizations (EDOs) and local Minnesota governments

- Work in two to four communities annually
- Serve communities of color (two since 2009)
- Vary approaches (e.g., focus groups, online/F2F, “leaders in front”)

Why Extension for BR&E?

Extension is the only resource in Minnesota for BR&E education, facilitation, and applied research assistance. While private sector BR&E tends to focus on 1:1 interactions with businesses, Extension goes beyond that to facilitate community discussions and action planning.

Action outcomes

Data collected before and after program changes show improved community actions.

Analysis of BR&E Initiatives in Minnesota Communities, 1999-2016			
	A. Pre-external evaluation by Dr. Linda Bosma	B. Initiatives since Bosma evaluation	C. Initiatives since ripple effect mapping began in 2011
# of community BR&E visitation initiatives studied	N=20	N=18	N=12
Date range (implementation)	1999-2006	2007-2016	2010-2016
% of implementation projects accomplished	Average = 35%	60%	74%

There was a 71% increase in implementation of prioritized projects (as selected by the community) from period A to B and an 111% increase from period A to C.

Creative impacts

Recent BR&E outcomes include:

- Annual lakeside concert series (Menahga)
- Annual information summits (Lyon County)
- Natural gas utility coming to town (Barnesville)
- Observed effects were particularly strong in the human, social and civic “community capitals”.



References

Darger, M., Tuck, B., & Bennet, J. (2017, May). Lessons learned from a generation of community-driven business retention and expansion programming. *Community Development*, 48(2).

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